

May 26, 2021

Dear PDA board members,

I am writing to you today to express my views as a citizen. I have been following the PDA board and City Council meetings to stay abreast of the evolving reorganizational plan of the PDA. It surely is a complicated process. I have noticed that citizens with backgrounds in finance and accounting have commented and asked questions. I would love to see answers put out there in the press where citizens can see more of the reorganization process of the PDA and become involved especially given the restrictions in public participation due to COVID.

I appreciate the leadership and experience that David Timmons brings to the reorganization of the PDA; however, his presentations portray a sense of urgency and I don't see time or attention being given for discussion on practical suggestions and concerns from the public. It's understandable that the PDA needs to get its financial act together quickly but with the restrictions of COVID, more time is needed to involve the public in these far reaching decisions.

After the financial mismanagement disclosed in 2020, the public appears to have lost trust in PDA's ability to manage its finances and employees. To regain confidence in the PDA and the proposed Hospitality Group, it seems that more transparent financial disclosure to the public is the correct way forward, ie. releasing financial records monthly instead of once or twice a year. Asking for what's needed in real time and showing how money has been appropriately directed over the prior year will likely win back the confidence of individuals and organizations that have the capacity to do good with their money for the benefit of this wonderful State Park in our backyard. Skip the endowment and let's see the PDA prove itself yearly.

I have yet to hear a verifiable figure of the deferred maintenance overall. I think a third party should assess that and provide a quote. We have to know what we're dealing with here. What if buildings that are hospitality or events related become unsafe or there's a major infrastructure problem that renders buildings uninhabitable. Then what happens to the hospitality piece and the expected income? That whole problem can't be put in a separate "box" as if it's unrelated. Partners won't be able to deal with unexpected expenses of deferred maintenance and we don't know for sure what State Parks will dole out from year to year.

My husband, Craig, is in the fundraising world so as we follow your journey I asked him to mention his concerns and comments. They are as follows: " I really don't understand why they are proposing that FWH be a nonprofit. I'll be surprised if the IRS classifies FWH as a nonprofit. I can't imagine many donors having any interest at all in contributing to a hospitality nonprofit. It makes no sense to me! They have a Fort Worden Foundation. With multiple foundations on the campus, it's likely that everyone could be competing for gifts from the same donors. Who is paying for the deferred maintenance? Again, not an attractive opportunity for most donors. This should be the responsibility of the PDA and the Fort Worden Foundation. I wonder if there are similar examples of what PDA is proposing that they can point to that have proven to be successful? If so, I want to hear about them!"

I think it's unwise to allow current sitting board members to migrate to the hospitality board or for the foundation board to stay the same. If you want to restore public trust, clean house and get fresh eyes and talent. That's not to say that the qualifications of current members aren't exceptional, it's just that they weren't guarding the operations closely enough to prevent this from happening and trust has been lost. Adjusting the language in the charter with the City is not enough. We all want the best for Fort Worden and what it has to potentially offer. Please slow down and allow more open dialogue before you seal this plan. Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,

Val Stewart  
Port Townsend